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A
LETTER

From a Minister of the
Church of England,
To the pretended
BAPTIST,

Author of the
Three Considerations

Directed to
Mr Penn.

*Allowed to be Published this 10th Day of
September, 1688.*

Sold at the Three Keys, in Nags-Head-Court, in Grace-
Church-Street, over-against the Conduit, 1688.

LETTER

From a Minister of the

Church of England

To the pretended

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Author of the

Three Questions



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A Letter from a Minister of the Church
of England, &c.

SIR,

TH O I very much Question whether you be of that Communion which the Title of your Paper would make us believe you are, and have perhaps some reason to guess your Name, yet I will pass by all personal Reflections, and only consider these Particulars which you are pleas'd to fancy are of so great Importance; I must profess the Task uneasy, because there is nothing offer'd that deserves an Answer, but seeing your Party are ready to magnifie the smallest Trifle, I will trace you in every Argument and Insinuation.

I hope you will not take it ill, to find your Questions reply'd to, by a *Church of England Man*, One who hath Suffer'd, Preach'd and Wrote in behalf of that Church, who therefore thinks himself obliged to justify the proceedings of many of her Faithful Sons, whose Reason tells them, That an Universal Liberty is not only the Duty of all *Protestants* to promote, but *their Interest* lies in obtaining and settling it by Law at this time.

And here, Sir, instead of your loose way of Questioning, it would have been more to the purpose, to have shewn that the *Test and Penal Laws* are a greater Security than the *Magna Charta* for *Liberty of Conscience*, which you endeavour to expose as a vain Speculation; for if we should grant all you advance against it, as long as the same Inconveniences attend the *Penal and Test Laws*, your own Argument must

be a great inducement to a considering Person to endeavour their Repeal, and that this is the real case, will appear by your Questions.

1. You demand, *What Security can any future New Law or Charter be, when so many of the present Laws are Dispensed with*; which is the sum of your first Query.

To which I Answer, That such a Law, simply Established, will be of as great Validity as the *Penal Laws* and *Tests*, which you complain are Dispensed with; you cannot have so little sense as not to know that a *Magna Charta* for Liberty, making it highly Penal, for any Party to infringe it, will as effectually secure the *Protestant Religion*, which I suppose you would be thought a Champion for, as those Laws which are complain'd of by above half the Nation, so that all you have to fear is the exercise of the Dispensing Power, which is either a Right belonging to the Crown or not, if it be, why should we attempt to lessen the Prerogative? if it be not, you have your Remedy at Law; but whether it be or no, the Argument lies so strong against you, that I believe you will find it hard to Answer this Query.

If the *Magna Charta* so much desired, be (as none can deny) as great a Security as the present *Penal Laws*, which are as liable to a Dispensation, as that can be; then is it not better to please the *King*, and to gratify so many Thousands, by Establishing it, when it leaves us in no worse Condition than we were before; than to offend the one, exasperate the other, and increase Mens Heats and Animosities by continuing them?

But if you would have reflected on what hath been so often urg'd, That the *King* never pretended to Dispence with any thing evil in its own Nature, as *Theft*, *Polygamy*, *Adultery*

Adultery and Murder, &c. and remember that by this *Magna Charta* all manner of Persecution for Conscience will be declared an Evil in it self; you could not but have seen, that it will signify much more then the Laws you contend for, which for that reason are Dispensed with, because they respect only *prohibited*, and not male Evils, now tho the Dispensing Power will affect the first, yet the greatest Assaults of it acknowledge it cannot reach the last.

I will grant you therefore, that as Mr *Langhorn* says, *The King may lawfully dispense with Penal Laws, and that he cannot give away, tho he may suspend the exercise of that Power;* and yet this *Magna Charta* is a very great Security, which neither can be Invalidated, Disannul'd, or Annihilated without an Act of Parliament, because it forbids a moral Evil, which all acknowledge the King cannot Dispence with.

2. And now of what force is your Second Query, whereby you would Invalidate that excellent design; as pretend the Ecclesiastical Commissioners can suspend the *Dissenters* as well as the *Conformists* Preachers; for still allowing what you insinuate, doth this *Magna Charta* give them any more power to do it? if not, what is their Commission to this matter, if it doth, you would do well to shew it. Pray, Sir, will you allow of this Argument, you ought not to accept of this present Liberty, because the King can recal it when he pleases; I suppose you will deny the Consequence, and so furnish me with an Answer to your Query; for if we must not accept of a *Magna Charta*, because of the pretence you urge, there is the same reason for you to decline the present Liberty. But you forget that this Ecclesiastical headship came by Law, that is the foundation of that Commission, and who made that Law too: I conceive a Law is able to limit as well as make it.

From

From weak Arguments you proceed to unhandſome Reflections; tho' the Honour and Integrity of that worthy Gentleman are too high to be reached by you; Mr *Pear* hath purchas'd by his Generoſity and Humanity, ſo good a Name, that 'tis only among thoſe who are utter Strangers to him, that you can hope to be believ'd; after all the clamours of the Faction that he was a *Jefuite* in diſguiſe, we have ſeen him ſtedfaſt to his firſt Principles, and that favourable juncture, which ſo many ſeem only to wait for, is paſſed, and he is ſtill the ſame, tho' he labours continually to ſerve the Publick, and oblige private Perſons of all Perſwaſions, and that gratis; for to the wonder of all that know him, he has declined both Publick and Private advantages, which others would eagerly perſue; and it is like the reſt of the Factionſly Inſinuations, to rank *Him* and the *Jefuits* together, tho' diſtant in their Principles; but he that could with confidence affirm without the leaſt proof, that a *Magna Charta* for Liberty of Conſcience, is contrary, both to all Sence and Reason, and our general intereſt, may venture to ſay any thing.

3. We are now come to a ſtanding Army, that mighty *Bugbear*, which you ſay, *Is above all the greateſt blow to a Magna Charta for Liberty*, and then run on to tell us what violences the *Souldiers* have committed in *France*, which is ſo little to the purpoſe, that I wonder you were not aſham'd to mention it, for what is their proceedings to us in *England*? There was a time when the *Baptiſts* thought (if you are one) a *Standing Army* very neceſſary, and I would ſain know, why this muſt needs be a greater Grievance then that was? The *Church of England* wiſht for, and rais'd it, ſo that they have no reaſon to complain, if their be any Irregularities committed by the *Souldiers*, why

why is not a due course taken to redress them? The *King* has published Methods for such to take as are grieved, to obtain Satisfaction. We might as well plead for the putting down all the Courts of Justice, because many are Ruined by their Judgments, tho just. Such as assert the necessity of disbanding the Army at this time, when it is so plain the Instrument of our Peace and Safety: But it is the common practice to complain of an Army, when Men find their Designs obstructed by it: I might have answered all your Queries, by telling you, that the intended *Magna Charta* is no more affected by the dispensing Power, the Ecclesiastical Commission, or the Army, than the *Penal Laws*; and therefore if those Considerations have any weight, it is to persuade us to part with these, seeing they signify nothing for those reasons: But I have been more particular, and according to your desire given an honest, clear, and I hope satisfactory Answer to your three Points, and shall briefly reply to what follows in the close of your Paper, where you discover such a temper as I am very loath to call by its proper Name, when you desire we may have no more *Que Harrant's*, an excellent Proposition, to desire so many little Independencies from his Majesty's Government, whereby he may be Affronted and Braved at any time, without dangers of Punishment, which the Throated with the Title of *Preserving our Liberties*, is designed to abridge the *King* of his

Your application of the Scripture is as unhappy as your Arguments; I appeal to all the World whether that Text of *St Peter*, 2 *Pet.* 2. 19. does not more properly belong to those who by fair promises of a future Liberty, endeavour to persuade unthinking Men to refuse that Blessing while they may possess it, and trust their Words, then to such as strive to enslave them, not to throw away a present

cer ainty.

certainty for future unconquered hopes. The same of Liberty as you observe, signifies nothing without the substance, Security, and continuance of it. All which you are offered by this *Magna Charta*, if you do not foolishly reject your own Morals. His Majesty hath graciously offered to Establish upon sure Foundations, and hath doubtless those things proposed in order to that good end, which will appear sufficient to Secure us, with those that desire to do so, if they be found insufficient, 'tis time then to complain, but it shows very much Arrogance and Impudence, to preudge matters before you know them. A little time will, I doubt not, expose the folly of such methods by convincing the World, *That the Royal Wisdom far surpasses these party Politicians*, and his Majesty hath not made such offers without being well Prepared to stop the Mouths of all those who are averse to compliance, merely for want of understanding how firmly that Liberty may be Secured to us.

And now, Sir, I shall take my leave, desiring you the next time you write, to let it be to the purpose, and not only a few Words put together, as Ill Times or Fair Sides, for which no Body will be the better, except the Printer, and that among the Faction, who so highly Applaud the most scurrilous Pamphlets, if it oppose the Government: a Spirit which I hope will at length yield to that of Peace, in order to which, I pray God we may know the things that belong unto our Peace before they be hid from us.

Arguments; I want to tell the World whether that text
 of mine was. It is not more properly before
 to those who by its promise of future liberty, entice
 you to pervert unthinking Men to refuse that blessing
 while they may possess it. I want to tell their words, then to
 such as live to enslave them, not to throw away a present
 for a distant one.

